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SUBJECT: B-W CDU CAUCUS CHIEF EXPECTS M-P TEUFEL TO STEP DOWN IN THE SUMMER OF 2004

¶11. Summary: In a meeting with Consul General on January 29, Baden-Wuerttemberg (B-W) caucus chief Guenther Oettinger, the possible successor to B-W Minister President Erwin Teufel (CDU), spoke about the upcoming elections in Hesse and Lower Saxony and his own political future. He also used the occasion to express his party's firm support of the U.S. Administration. Oettinger criticized the national government for straining the U.S.-German relationship for purely tactical reasons. Concerning the upcoming state elections in Hesse and Lower Saxony, Oettinger is confident that the CDU will win both elections. Via the Bundesrat, the CDU will increase the pressure on the national government to go ahead with fundamental reforms. Concerning his own future, Oettinger stated that he expects Minister President (M-P) Teufel to step down in the middle of next year to give his successor a chance to start on the 2006-election campaign. Oettinger hinted that he would be ready to take over if the party supports him. In any case, he will not be available as caucus chief in the next legislative period starting ¶2006. End Summary.

¶12. Oettinger expressed his deep regret over the tension that Chancellor Schroeder has brought into the German-American relationship. The B-W state government and in particular the state CDU are disappointed that 55 years of friendship with the U.S. are being jeopardized for tactical reasons. However, Oettinger believes that the "Iraq card" will not work for the state elections in Hesse and Lower Saxony. According to him, the voters want to hear about internal issues like unemployment, education or taxes.

¶13. Oettinger was fairly confident that Hesse M-P Roland Koch will be re-elected. Christian Wulff, the CDU candidate running against Lower Saxony M-P Siegmar Gabriel (SPD) is in a slightly different situation in that he would not have a chance if the national SPD/Green coalition government wasn't as unpopular as it is. Since the federal government has no new ideas and no clear plan for the nation, the electorate in the two states will take the opportunity to cast a protest vote. He predicted that most of the frustration would hit the SPD. The Greens are in a better position since they are not that close to the unions and thus in a better position to call for reforms.

¶14. Concerning the future of the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), Oettinger pointed out that the FDP is in a pretty comfortable situation in the southwest. B-W is the political home of both the FDP and the Greens. The Liberals are deeply rooted in the southwest and their prospects in B-W are good. For the national party, he sees no quick solution to the Moellemann-Westerwelle conflict. The FDP's "18 percent" strategy was not enough to convince voters, since it could not make up for the lack of a party platform with mass appeal. Oettinger sees the FDP back in its traditional role of a kingmaker after the Hesse and Lower Saxony State elections. In both states, the Liberals will be needed to secure a majority in parliament for either party - a role they have been playing for decades. A CDU election victory in Hesse and Lower Saxony will not bring down the national government. However, it will bring the CDU into a position to exert even greater influence on national politics from the Bundesrat in which the opposition already enjoys a majority). The CDU will try to speed up the reform process and will force the national government to make compromises. An election victory in both states would increase the CDU majority in the Bundesrat in such a way that it could almost be considered a "parallel government," Oettinger said.

¶15. When asked about possible CDU/Greens cooperation on state level, Oettinger noted that a CDU/Greens coalition will come whenever it helps to avoid SPD/PDS or SPD/Greens coalitions. As an example, he cited the Saarland as possible model for the first CDU/Green coalition on a state level in 2004. However, as long as the FDP is available as a coalition partner, there is no need for the CDU to consider cooperation with the Greens.

¶16. Concerning his own political future in the southwest, Oettinger stated that M-P Teufel would not run in the 2006 election campaign. Next year, the CDU will have to decide who is to succeed Teufel, Oettinger said. He noted that it would be an important advantage for the party if the CDU can

go into the 2006 election campaign with a new Minister President who has already assumed responsibility. Oettinger also stated that in case the CDU does not decide in his favor, he would no longer be available for the position of caucus chief in the next legislative period.

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